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ABSTRACT

Characteristics and career/educational plans of 95 students who graduated from the University of North Carolina at Wilmington in 1984 were investigated. Fifty-seven percent earned the bachelor of arts degree, 41 percent the bachelor of science degree, and 2 percent the associate's degree. Only three students were not white, and 80 percent were single. At the time of graduation 31 percent had accepted full-time employment, while 17 percent were working part-time. The median salary for the sample was $15,000. Among additional findings were that: graduates who accepted full-time employment were more likely to be single males with a grade point average (GPA) of 2.51-3.0; 31 percent of those who accepted a job, said it was related to their career objective; 34 percent learned of their job opportunity through family or friends, while 17 percent discovered the job through the career planning and placement service; 16 percent of the graduates were seeking further studies during the summer or fall of 1984; graduates continuing their education full-time were more likely to be single females with a GPA of 3.0-3.5; and 53 percent were enrolled in master's programs. In the data are included the incomes on graduates by college major and the number of graduates continuing education by major. (SW)

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SURVEY OF SPRING 1984 GRADUATES

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INTRODUCTION

The career development of a college educated person can be viewed as a process of preparation, planning, and work experience. This research is part of an ongoing effort by the University to follow the progress of graduates who completed their studies in the same year and who would be expected to take diverse educational and career paths.

What is presented is a summary of background information and post graduation plans collected from 95 students who were enrolled and graduated in the spring of 1984.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Instrument

The form used for the survey of 1984 graduates was based on previous pre-graduation instruments emanating from the Office of Institutional Research. Two main areas were addressed: background information and future career/educational plans. A copy of the survey is provided in the Appendix.

Participants

On April 20, 1984, surveys were placed in the campus mailboxes. Of the 492 students identified as enrolled and eligible to graduate in the spring of 1984, 62 or 13 percent were non-deliverable because students had either turned in their mail box key (N = 43), failed to check their mail (N = 13), or withdrew without notice (N = 6). Thus, 430 or 87 percent of the enrolled and eligible graduates received surveys. After one follow-up, 95 were returned as usable surveys for a 22 percent response rate.

Although a 50 percent response rate is considered adequate for analysis and reporting, the reader should bear in mind that such guidelines have no statistical basis and a demonstrated lack of response

bias is far more important than a high response rate. Chi square analyses compared the 95 respondents to the 492 students who represented the population across race, sex, and degree. Response rates only differed on the variable of college degree ($X^2_2 = 7.43$, $p < .05$). Persons with Associate degrees were significantly underrepresented in the survey.

Procedure

A cover letter in the form of a memorandum to spring 1984 graduates accompanied the survey as well as a return envelope. Students were asked to place completed surveys in a box adjacent to the campus post office. Three weeks after the initial survey distribution, a follow-up was conducted during graduation rehearsal (May 11, 1984). Returns contributed 19 (20 percent) of the 95 completed surveys. Unfortunately, another office was also distributing a survey. This served to diminish response rates.

Since the sample was not drawn randomly, only descriptive statistical analyses were undertaken using SPSSX (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences - Version X). Selected variables from the Registrar's master file were merged with survey results to provide a more complete analysis of data (i.e., race, degree, and GPA).

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE STUDY

General Background

* Of the ninety-five graduates, 57 percent earned the Bachelor of Arts, 41 percent the Bachelor of Science and 2 percent the Associate's degree. In the population, persons with Associate degrees were 11 percent of the group. This difference was statistically significant at the five percent level.

* Gender was nearly evenly split with 55 percent female and 45 percent male.

* In terms of ethnicity, there were 92 whites, 2 blacks and 1 other.

* Nearly all (80 percent) of the graduates were single.

* The two areas wherein graduates sought the most outside help while in college were educational (33 percent) and vocational (38 percent) counseling.

* Over half (51 percent) of the graduates participated in pre-professional or departmental clubs; one-third played sports; and one-fourth were involved in social clubs or community organizations.

* Most rated themselves as "above average" across several ability areas (e.g., athletics, leadership, written expression, etc.)

* Practically everyone (97 percent) said they would go to college again.

* Almost all (79 percent) said they would go to UNCW again; 91 percent would recommend the University to a friend or relative.

* Most (79 percent) would pursue the same major.

* Most (61 percent) did not attend Career Day.

Employed Graduates

* At the time of graduation, nearly a third (31 percent) had accepted full-time employment while 17 percent were working part-time. Over half (55 percent) of those accepting full-time jobs and one-fourth of those accepting part-time positions are male. Of the 25 graduates who both accepted full-time positions and reported their salary, the median income was $16,000. Nearly 40 percent (36 percent) reported incomes of $18,000 or more with one indicating over $24,000. Median income for part-time workers was $7,000. For the entire sample, 40 percent reported salary. This includes both full-time, part-time, and graduates who failed to check employment status. The median salary for the entire group was

$15,000 with three reporting incomes of over $24,000. For the thirty-eight graduates who reported salary, Table 1 of the Appendix gives a breakdown of income by majors.

* A comparison of employment status with GPA revealed that of the 29 graduates who accepted full-time employment, the median GPA was within the range 2.51-3.0. Over 40 percent (41 percent), had GPA's greater than 3.1.

* Nearly a third (31 percent) of all who accepted jobs, said it was related to their final career objective. A fourth said the position was related to their degree area.

* For the 26 percent of full-time employed graduates who also listed job location, nearly all (81 percent) accepted employment in North Carolina. Nearly a third (31 percent) of these jobs were within 100 miles of Wilmington. Just over a fourth (27 percent) were in Wilmington.

* Just over a third (34 percent) learned of their job opportunity through family or friends. Seventeen percent discovered the job opportunity through the Career Planning and Placement Center. One person of the 29 discovered a position as a result of attending Career Day. Another third put "other" but did not specify the job source.

* Of 27 graduates who were employed full-time and answered the question related to "job offer satisfaction," 70 percent answered positively.

* There were only 2 (7 percent) veterans among the 29 graduates in full-time jobs.

* Nearly 2 out 5 (38 percent) accepting full-time positions viewed the bachelor's degree as the highest level of education they plan to complete. Almost half (45 percent) aspired to at least a master's degree.

* Of the 29 who accepted full-time jobs, about a quarter said they either did not work a part-time job the last two years in college (28 percent) or worked 17-24 hours per week (24 percent).

* In terms of receiving outside help in courses during college, about a third (31 percent) of those in full-time jobs sought vocational counseling.

* Over half (55 percent) who took full-time jobs participated in pre-professional or departmental clubs while at UNCW.

Graduates Continuing Education

* Graduates seeking further studies this summer or fall represent 16 percent of the group. For the most part (53 percent), graduates are enrolled in master's level programs. Six out of ten are female. Nearly all (87 percent) plan to enroll full-time. Data reflecting fields of study and number enrolled are located in Table 2.

* As might be expected, those continuing their studies have higher GPA's than those accepting immediate employment. Greater than 7 out 10 (73 percent) have GPA's of at least 3.0 with a median GPA range of 3.0 - 3.5.

* Of the 15 graduates continuing their education, over half (53 percent) aspire to at least a master's degree. Interestingly, of the 24 who plan not to immediately continue school, 75 percent also aspire to the master's level.

* Forty percent did not hold part-time jobs during the last two years in college. Another 40 percent worked less than 16 hours per week.

* A third of those continuing their education claim to have received educational and vocational counseling as well as assistance in writing ability.

* Over half (53 percent) participated in pre-professional or departmental clubs.

Graduates Not Seeking Or Accepting Employment

* Of 58 graduates who responded, 29 percent said they were not seeking employment. Of these seventeen individuals, nearly half (47 percent) already accepted full-time or part-time jobs while most of the rest (41 percent) are those continuing their studies.

* Five individuals have not accepted an employment offer because of either poor salary, lack of relationship to educational background, or location of job.

SUMMARY

Ninety-five students who were enrolled and scheduled for graduation during the spring of 1984 responded to a mailed survey. Respondents reflected just over a fifth of the eligible graduates and were representative with respect to race and sex. Associate degree recipients were underrepresented in the study.

Highlights of the study reflect the diversity among both background and future plans of graduates. This particular group reflects a cohort that was moderately involved in campus extracurricular activities, took advantage of available support services, and accepted employment upon graduation. Very few of the graduates chose to immediately continue their education.

Full-time employed graduates represent 31 percent of the group and would most likely be a single male who accepted a position within 100 miles of Wilmington at a median starting salary of $16,000. He probably was a management major with a 2.51 - 3.0 GPA.

Graduates continuing their education as full-time students represent 16 percent of the group and would most likely be a single female working toward a master's degree in education who graduated with a 3.0 - 3.5 GPA.

Graduates who were not seeking employment represented 29 percent of the group with most of these either working full-time/part-time jobs or continuing their studies. The remainder of the group claims to be actively seeking employment.

Comments made in the survey range from being very positive to very negative. Two of the most representative comments follow:

* UNCW is a great school. Has great opportunities, good and knowledgeable professors, adequate facilities, and it rates with any college in all areas. I would recommend UNCW to anyone, and I am proud to say that I graduated from UNCW.

* Yes, if time were turned back and I knew what I presently now know, I would still go back to school; however, it has been four "long" years and I'm glad it's over.

Although it may be somewhat premature to inquire about future plans of new graduates, these data point to the fact that quite a large percentage of students do have immediate educational and career plans.

It is recommended that for this type of research to be effective it should be designed to monitor the crucial first years of employment. Of benefit would be a longitudinal study of the career development of a particular freshmen class followed through the first years of employment. A comparison of plans they expressed would facilitate an examination of the relationship between current occupation and undergraduate major. Factors to be assessed associated with various career outcomes might focus on grades, self-ratings, job features considered important in career choice, and personal influences.

TABLE I

COLLEGE MAJOR BY INCOME
(N=38)

MAJOR (N)	UNDER $6	$6-8	$8-10	$10-12	$12-14	$14-16	$16-18	$18-20	$20-2
INCOME (Thousands)									
Accounting (3)						2		1	
Biology (1)							1		
Commerce (2)					1			1	
Computer Science (1)							1		
Economics (1)				1					
Childhood Elem Education (1)							1		
Intermediate Elem Educ (3)	1	1			1				
English (1)		1							
History (2)				1					
Math (1)									2
Marine Biology (2)		1			1			1	
Management (5)	1			1		1			1
Marketing (2)						1			1
Creative Arts (1)			1						1
Nursing (1)							1		
Physical Education (2)				1			1		
Physics (1)					1				
Political Science (2)		1				1		1	
Parks & Recreation (2)	1								
Special Education (2)			1	1					
Sociology (2)									
Total (38)	3	4	2	4	4	5	5	4	4

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TABLE 2

GRADUATES CONTINUING EDUCATION
FIELDS OF STUDY BY ENROLLMENT

FIELD OF STUDY	NUMBER ENROLLED
General Education	4
Journalism	2
Law	2
Food Service	1
Biology	1
Zoology	1
Biochemistry	1
Business Management	1
Personnal Management	1
Communications	1
Computer Science	1
Special Education	1
Nursing	1
Veternary	1
	N = 19